

Home About Us Church Growth Directory Leadership Ministry New Church News TAP/PATHWAYS Donate



News

[Breaking News](#)

[Feature Focus](#)

[Celebrate](#)

[Conference News](#)

[Local Church News](#)

[Lifting Up...](#)

[NEWS Archives](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[SEC News Resources](#)

SECUCC eNewsletter

[Sign up for SECUCC](#)

[Email Newsletter](#)

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ► [NEWS](#)

A Word From Tim Downs - June



ATLANTA 2011 | Central Congregational UCC

Dear Friends,

The Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference took place Saturday, June 11th. It was graciously hosted by Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta. Our organizing committee had said, "We want an annual meeting that is affordable and accessible, and that brings us into a larger sense of community." They asked that the meeting

celebrate some of the dynamic ministries of the conference and its congregations. The evaluations we received suggested that we succeeded in touching people's needs and strengthening an awareness of the extraordinary ministries that are unfolding in our midst.

The day began at 9:00 with Conversation Corners, which ranged in topics from introducing the Pathways program to reporting on our capital campaign to "Transform

Churches and Transform Lives." There were workshops, which addressed financial development and accountability within the life of the local church. Other workshops were a part of the invitation to consider being a Global Mission Partner Conference by introducing our upcoming mission trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Global Theological Education trip to Thailand in 2012. Tim Downs spoke about his recent trip to China to visit the work of our partner churches. We also had an introduction to the work of our partner in ministry, the Center for Progressive Renewal.

Following these conversations, we gathered for a moving worship service led by Kirkwood UCC. The worship began with a Service of Remembrance for all in our Conference who have died over the last year. Candles were lit, hymns sung and the many named who have been loved dearly. We ended on a word of hope and promise.

Ginny Nixon ably moderated our Annual Meeting. She received the moderator's cross from her predecessor, Vanessa Robbs, to open the meeting. All of the annual reports are available to you by going to this link: We encourage you to look at the accounts of the ministries that take place on your behalf, particularly at the budget for 2011. Perhaps most noteworthy, the Conference Annual Meeting passed a resolution introduced with an endorsement of the Board that we become a Global Mission Partner Conference.

During lunch, we recognized significant anniversary dates of ordination of pastors.

UCC News

UCC Newsroom

Headlines from the United Church of Christ

[Clergy health care resolution approved by Synod delegates](#)

Delegates to General Synod 28 restored the vigor of the resolution "Affirming Healthcare Coverage for UCC Authorized Ministers and Their Families."

The amended resolution passed with 81 percent of the vote.



Southeast Conference FAQ's

[Who is the SEC?](#)

[Who is the UCC?](#)

[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)

[What Ministries are Available?](#)

[Is Training Available?](#)

[CLICK HERE | SEC 2011 Meeting Materials](#)

During January, the recognized significant anniversary dates of ordination of pastors, those preparing for ministry, and those who are new to ministry in the Southeast Conference. Our program featured a panel of Southeast Conference leaders who are doing noteworthy ministry focusing on renewal. Gwen Thomas spoke about the positive impact of being Open and Affirming on the life and ministry of an African-American church, particularly the church where she is a leader, Victory for the World UCC, Stone Mountain. Shannon Michael Pater, pastor of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, spoke about the challenges of introducing change in a church, which has a 129-year history, during which it has on occasion struggled for a sense of mission, and even at times for its own existence. He highlighted the particular challenges of overcoming the costs of a building and other dynamics in beginning to generate a spirit of mission and renewal established and rooted in love. Susie Smith, the pastor of Peace Congregational UCC in Clemson, SC, shared reflections about a ministry that has reached out to LGBTQ high school age young men and women across upstate South Carolina, and a ministry which is promoting the "locavore" movement, and care for the environment. Cindy Andrews-Looper of Holy Trinity Community, UCC, Nashville, spoke about the challenges of bringing greater diversity to a historically GLBT congregation, and the rich potential of ministry organized around small groups and mission. Each indicated that they would be available to share their experiences with others who might be interested. We were adjourned following a lively service of music and worship led by Praxis UCC, a new church start in the Atlanta area.

Upon reflecting on the churches and conference before us, I saw churches that are energetic and visionary, seeking to press toward justice and love. I saw a conference that is building vitality in our midst, and reminding us that we are connected in a web of mutuality, not only among ourselves but globally. I saw a people alive in the spirit.

Peace,

Tim Downs, *Conference Minister*
Timothy C. DownsTimothy C. Downs

Latest News	Most Read Articles
Feature Focus - June 2011	Southeast Conference UCC (SEC)
News From Our Local Churches - June	UCC History and Polity
Conference News - June	Southeast Conference Campaign
A Word From Tim Downs - June	General Synod 2011
Celebrations June 2011	Steps to Planting a New Church

SECUCC CONTACTS

► Conference Minister

► TAP Director

► SEC Donations

► Church Development

► Communications Director

SECUCC RESOURCES

► Annual Meeting

► Global Theological Education

► Local Church News

► SEC Churches

► Seminars/Webinars

FAVORITE LINKS

► Bridge 4 Faith

► The Center for Progressive Renewal

► United Church of Christ

► Mission Insite

► Resource Center

EVENTS CALENDAR

« < July 2011 > »

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

Steps to Planting a New Church

News

Contact Us

Donate



News

[Breaking News](#)
[Feature Focus](#)
[Celebrate](#)
[Conference News](#)
[Local Church News](#)
[Lifting Up...](#)
[NEWS Archives](#)
[Upcoming Events](#)
[SEC News Resources](#)

SECUCC eNewsletter

Sign up for SECUCC
Email Newsletter

Southeast Conference FAQ's

[Who is the SEC?](#)
[Who is the UCC?](#)
[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)
[What Ministries are Available?](#)
[Is Training Available?](#)

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ► [CONFERENCE NEWS](#) ► OCWM SUNDAY SEPT 18

OCWM Sunday Sept 18



OCWM Continuing Testament, Extravagant Welcome, Changing Lives!

Long ago, I was talking to the chair of a mission committee, who proudly said to me, "Our church gives to mission; we don't support bureaucracy, so we don't give to OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission)." She was reflecting what I have experienced as a local church pastor sitting with a finance committee as it takes a long look at the annual budget, and the comment is made that, "Well, we can cut OCWM another \$3,000, that won't hurt us." In both of those misperceptions, what is lost is that OCWM is not "just out there," OCWM is who we are. The Southeast Conference has called for churches to celebrate OCWM Sunday on September 18th, to help us all understand that OCWM is about us not a "them" outside our walls.

To help you prepare for this, we have developed a Southeast Conference brochure for you to use as a bulletin insert or attached to your newsletter, or as a handout. [Link here](#). If you need copies from the conference, please contact [GerriGerri](#), and request them letting us know how many copies you would like. There are wonderful resources in addition to the brochure on the UCC website, including a PowerPoint at <http://www.ucc.org/ocwm/pics-and-pdfs/OCWM-Powerpoint-PDF.pdf>. There is a video at <http://www.ucc.org/ocwm/>, which you can show in worship, or at an adult education event. There are other materials at this same site that you can download and use.



We want you to use September 18th, or a date of your choosing to educate the whole church about how OCWM connects you with mission around the world and equips ministry in the conference to be present to you and others as local churches. Staff and Board members will be available to bring a mission moment about OCWM to you in worship, on the 18th or on the Sunday, you choose. [Contact Tim Downs](#) [Contact Tim Downs](#) to schedule a visitor.

I often hear the question, "OCWM, what's in it for me?" It is OCWM that brings you support for your search for a new pastor, or makes possible church school curricula, the support of staff and your church in conflict or transition, the TAP (Theology Among the People) program to equip your lay ministries, opportunities for work camps to serve others in need, involvement in global ministries, and much more. Perhaps the most touching testimony to the impact of OCWM was made by Gary Myers, pastor of Trinity Congregational UCC, Athens, AL, at our annual meeting. He stood up to announce that within a day of the tornadoes that swept through the communities and destroyed the homes of his members, the Southeast Conference was there, with support, financial, spiritual and otherwise. He added, "Never

OCWM

BASIC SUPPORT /10

doubt how important your giving is to you, and to all of us together to be a strong and missional church in the name of Jesus Christ. OCWM; it changes lives, not only the lives of others, but our lives as well."

The Southeast Conference has encouraged its congregations over the last decade to be Covenant Keeping churches, or give 10% or more of their operating budget to OCWM Basic Support. We are proud that 16% or 8 of our churches have met that goal, and that another 15 of our churches are giving 5% or more as they work to increase toward being Covenant Keepers. Even with this faithful giving for which we are very grateful, the support of our local churches amounts to only about one half of what is needed to equip the ministries that equip them. [Here is a link to listing](#) of all the churches in the conference and their giving to OCWM. Look up your congregation!

[Home](#)
[About Us](#)
[Church Growth](#)
[Directory](#)
[Leadership](#)
[Ministry](#)
[New Church](#)
[News](#)
[TAP/PATHWAYS](#)[Donate](#)

Tuesday, 19 Jul 2011

News[Breaking News](#)[Feature Focus](#)[Celebrate](#)[Conference News](#)[Local Church News](#)[Lifting Up...](#)[NEWS Archives](#)[Upcoming Events](#)[SEC News Resources](#)**SECUCC eNewsletter**
**Sign up for SECUCC
Email Newsletter**

Southeast Conference FAQ's[Who is the SEC?](#)[Who is the UCC?](#)[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)[What Ministries are Available?](#)[Is Training Available?](#)YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ► [LOCAL CHURCH NEWS](#)**News From Our Local Churches - June****Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta Seeking Youth Director for Growing Ministries**

Pilgrimage UCC in Marietta, GA has a long history of a vital youth ministry. They are seeking a part-time youth director who is interested in working with a dynamic UCC congregation northeast of Atlanta. Contact [Becky Nelson](#) via email or (404) 406-6121 for further information.

Midway Congregational UCC Seeks to Establish Wellness Center as Ministries Expand

Midway Congregational UCC, Midway GA, under the leadership of their newly called pastor, Larry Evans, has announced that it is establishing a Wellness Center to provide pastoral care and counseling to Liberty County seeking to serve at risk children, families, adults and couples. This center will offer individual, couple and family counseling, life skills training, workshops and life transitions support. Dr. Evans is a certified and licensed therapist, and will be working with the Coastal Counseling Center of Savannah.

**Plymouth Congregational UCC Calls New Pastor**

Sunday, May 29, 2011, Plymouth Congregational UCC in Charleston, elected Ramon L. Washington as their new pastor. Bob Macfarlane, Interim at Circular Church, was asked to lead the congregation in welcoming the Washington

family into the fellowship of Plymouth Church, and to extend the Hand of Fellowship to them, on behalf of the Southeast Conference of the United Church of Christ. Pictured with Rev. Macfarlane, are Ramon & Laquinta Washington and four of their six children. Standing behind them is Edward Smalls Moderator of Plymouth Congregational UCC.

Lancaster Seminary Graduate Heads to Thailand to Pursue Doctorate

Raylena Church Fields, a recent Lancaster Seminary graduate is heading back to Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Raylena was a part of the TAP Global Missions program that visited Payap in January. There she found the doctoral program she was looking for at

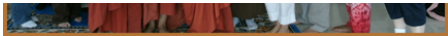
**UCC News****UCC Newsroom**

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rayap's Institute of Religion,
Culture and Peace.
[Link here to read more](#) of her story on the Lancaster Theological Seminary website.



Latest News	Most Read Articles
Feature Focus - June 2011	Southeast Conference UCC (SEC)
News From Our Local Churches - June	UCC History and Polity
Conference News - June	Southeast Conference Campaign
A Word From Tim Downs - June	General Synod 2011
Celebrations June 2011	Steps to Planting a New Church

SECUCC CONTACTS

- ▶ Conference Minister
- ▶ TAP Director
- ▶ SEC Donations
- ▶ Church Development
- ▶ Communications Director

SECUCC RESOURCES

- ▶ Annual Meeting
- ▶ Global Theological Education
- ▶ Local Church News
- ▶ SEC Churches
- ▶ Seminars/Webinars

FAVORITE LINKS

- ▶ Bridge 4 Faith
- ▶ The Center for Progressive Renewal
- ▶ United Church of Christ
- ▶ Mission Insite
- ▶ Resource Center

EVENTS CALENDAR

July 2011						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

[Steps to Planting a New Church](#) [News](#) [Contact Us](#) [Donate](#)



- News
- Breaking News

Feature Focus

Celebrate

Conference News

Local Church News

Lifting Up...

NEWS Archives

Upcoming Events

SEC News Resources

SECUCC eNewsletter

Sign up for SECUCC Email Newsletter

GO

Southeast Conference FAQ's

- Who is the SEC?
- Who is the UCC?
- How Do I Find a UCC Church?
- What Ministries are Available?
- Is Training Available?

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ▶ [LIFTING UP...](#)

Lifting Up . . . June

We are saddened to receive the news that **Chris Graham**, pastor of Church of the Savior, Roswell, GA has received a diagnosis of having ALS. Hold him, his family and the congregation in your prayers.

James Schwarzlose, retired minister, and member of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, is preparing for heart surgery this month.

Bennie Liggins, pastor of Unity UCC continues his recovery from complications due to surgery, is gaining strength, and continuing to move toward a full recovery

Michael Garrett, who has been licensed for ministry at First Congregational UCC, Montgomery for fifteen years, has announced his retirement from that ministry. We have been deeply grateful for his service with us for these years.

Diantha Brown who has served as pastor of First United Church of Christ in Belvidere, TN., has announced that in September she is returning to her roots in New York State to be closer to family.

Latest News	Most Read Articles
Feature Focus - June 2011	Southeast Conference UCC (SEC)
News From Our Local Churches - June	UCC History and Polity
Conference News - June	Southeast Conference Campaign
A Word From Tim Downs - June	General Synod 2011
Celebrations June 2011	Steps to Planting a New Church



SECUCC CONTACTS

▶ Conference Minister

▶ TAP Director

▶ SEC Donations

▶ Church Development

▶ Communications Director

SECUCC RESOURCES

▶ Annual Meeting

▶ Global Theological Education

▶ Local Church News

▶ SEC Churches

▶ Seminars/Webinars

FAVORITE LINKS

▶ Bridge 4 Faith

▶ The Center for Progressive Renewal

▶ United Church of Christ

▶ Mission Insite

▶ Resource Center

EVENTS CALENDAR

« < July 2011 > »

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6



News

[Breaking News](#)
[Feature Focus](#)
[Celebrate](#)
[Conference News](#)
[Local Church News](#)
[Lifting Up...](#)
[NEWS Archives](#)
[Upcoming Events](#)
[SEC News Resources](#)

SECUCC eNewsletter

[Sign up for SECUCC](#)
[Email Newsletter](#)

Southeast Conference FAQ's

[Who is the SEC?](#)
[Who is the UCC?](#)
[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)
[What Ministries are Available?](#)
[Is Training Available?](#)

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ► [CELEBRATE](#) ► GLOBAL MISSION PARTNER

Global Mission Partner



Congratulations to **Southeast Conference** for Becoming a Global Mission Partner. The Southeast Conference has received a letter of thanks from Cally Rogers-Witte and Jan Aerie of Global Ministries thanking us for our action of voting to become a Global Mission Partner Conference.



Resolution to Become a Global Missions Conference Adopted at Annual Meeting

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Spirit." – Matthew 28:19

At the 45th Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference on 6/11/11, in Atlanta, GA, the body adopted the resolution to become a Global Mission Conference.

What does this mean?

It means that the Southeast Conference commits to an action plan where it...

1. **PRAYS** regularly for partners, missionaries and the world;
2. **EDUCATES** its members about global issues from preschool age to adult;
3. **SEEKS JUSTICE** for the "least of these" in the international community;
4. **RECEIVES** the gifts of the global church;
5. **GIVES** to the work of global mission;
6. **SENDS** its members into the world to share the Good News of Jesus;
7. **GROWS** in sharing the story of God's mission with others; and
8. **IMPLEMENTS** this resolution through a body appointed by and accountable to the SEC Board of Directors.



the SEC Board of Directors.

Since 1996, the United Church of Christ has joined with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ throughout the world via Common Global Ministries. We continue to support 270 partners in 68 countries as they recover from disasters, heal the sick, educate their children, and prepare for ministry.



However, we never go into a country to change the culture, to Americanize, or to "civilize". As Conference Minister Tim Downs said at the Annual Meeting, we go in to "partner rather than to proselytize." We seek to support ministers – lay, licensed and ordained – as they meet needs within their

own culture in whatever way that Holy Spirit calls them.

In the same way, we accept the spiritual gifts that other cultures have to offer us. Right here in the U.S., we have received gifts of our global partners as we recovered from Hurricane Katrina, Midwest floods and Southeast tornadoes. We have received messages of encouragement and assurance of the love of our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as volunteer and financial assistance.

Associate Conference Minister Kathy Clark and Wider Church Ministries Board member Marcia Bentley researched and prepared the resolution for submission. After having been signed by our Conference Minister and Conference Moderator Ginny Nixon, the resolution was submitted to Jan Aerie, Executive for Mission Education and Interpretation, in the national UCC office in Cleveland.

To see the entire resolution, visit the following [link on the Conference website](#):

Local congregations are urged to take on this commitment as well.

[Visit Global Ministries website](#) for further information about becoming a Global Mission Church.

Photos on this page represent -

1) President of Yanjing Seminary, Dr. Gao Ying, with Dr. Xiaoling Zhu, East Asia Secretary for Global Ministries. Yanjing Seminary receives generous support from the UCC (right).



2) A church in China in Henan Province which is a partner in mission through Global Ministries. (left)

Our commitment to Global Ministries – through our contributions to OCWM and OGHS, as well as the gifts of our own time, talents and love – will show the world that we in the UCC strive to live out the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17:20 – "that they may all be one."

– speech given by Marcia Bentley at the SEC 2011 Annual Meeting in Atlanta.

Home About Us Church Growth Directory Leadership Ministry New Church News TAP/PATHWAYS Donate



News

Breaking News

Feature Focus

Celebrate

Conference News

Local Church News

Lifting Up...

NEWS Archives

Upcoming Events

SEC News Resources

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ► [CONFERENCE NEWS](#)

Conference News - June



UCC General Synod Comes to Neighboring Florida Conference

The bi-annual national gathering of the United Church of Christ, General Synod, will gather in Tampa, Florida, July 1st through the 5th, and over 45 people from the Southeast Conference will be attending as visitors and in official capacities. The Southeast Conference has seven delegates. Other delegates from our Conference serving on the Boards of Covenant Ministries of the UCC will be attending as well. The Conference is proud that "one of our own," Elizabeth Clement, a member of First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, will be preaching at the closing worship service of General Synod.

[Link here for more information](#) on the Synod event and list of delegates.



SECUCC eNewsletter

Sign up for SECUCC
Email Newsletter

Southeast Conference FAQ's

[Who is the SEC?](#)

[Who is the UCC?](#)

[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)

[What Ministries are Available?](#)

[Is Training Available?](#)

Introducing the New Members of the Southeast Conference Board of Directors

At our 2011, Annual Meeting the Conference elected a number of people to the Board of Directors. The new members reflect the growing diversity of the conference in many ways including geography, gender, race, orientation, age, the newness of their congregation to the UCC, and other factors. We are delighted to welcome the following people to our Board:



Jennifer Spears: Jennifer was elected secretary of the board. She is a member of a newly affiliated church, Garden of Grace UCC, Columbia, SC. She has recently been licensed for ministry there, and is working alongside of the pastor, Andy Sidden.

Jimmy Loyless: Elected treasurer, Jimmy and his wife Beth are long time members of the United Church of Christ. Jimmy is a member of Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA. He has recently retired from working with the FDIC.

Chris Lyman-Waldron: Chris is the pastor of Praxis UCC, Atlanta. Chris was elected to

serve as the Southeast Conference representative on the Board of the Covenanted Ministry Justice and Witness Ministry.

Jeremy Rich: Jeremy, who has served as a General Synod delegate before this, is the pastor of Bethany Congregational UCC, Thomasville, GA. He is a participant in TAP.

Carrole Moss: Carrole, a longtime member of the UCC who came to the South from Connecticut, is a member of Victory for the World UCC, Stone Mountain. She also serves on the Committee on Ministry of the Georgia South Carolina Association and is a graduate of TAP.

Leslie Etheredge: Leslie is the associate pastor at Church of the Savior, Knoxville.

Jennifer Austin: Jennifer is the volunteer coordinator and administrator at Holy Trinity Community UCC, Nashville.

Angela Balfour Franklin: A member of First Congregational Christian UCC, Birmingham, Angela works for the Birmingham News, and recently served as a UCC missionary in South Africa.

Larry Calbert: Larry is returning to the Board after a several year absence. He is the pastor of Rush Memorial UCC, Atlanta, and serves on the Committee on Ministry of the Georgia-South Carolina Association.

These gifted people who were elected replace the following people who have retired from the board having served their terms: **Bette Grave Thomas, Paul Hiltman, John Gill, Elizabeth Clement, and Bob Watson.** Welcome to all who join us, and thank you to all those who have retired!

OCWM Continuing Testament, Extravagant Welcome, Changing Lives!

Long ago, I was talking to the chair of a mission committee, who proudly said to me, "Our church gives to mission; we don't support bureaucracy, so we don't give to OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission)." She was reflecting what I have experienced as a local church pastor sitting with a finance committee as it takes a long look at the annual budget, and the comment is made that, "Well, we can cut OCWM another \$3,000, that won't hurt us." In both of those misperceptions, what is lost is that OCWM is not "just out there," OCWM is who we are. The Southeast Conference has called for churches to celebrate OCWM Sunday on September 18th, to help us all understand that OCWM is about us not a "them" outside our walls.

[Link here for more information](#) on OCWM and September 18 materials.

SEC Clergy "Seize the Dinner" | Prior to Annual Meeting

By Kathy Clark

On the Friday prior to this year's Annual Meeting, clergy and their partners or spouses from throughout the Southeast Conference came together for an evening of fellowship, relationship building, and directed conversation over dinner. ***We came. We ate. We conversed.*** For the first time in several years, clergy from all over the Southeast Conference gathered for a fellowship event at the Carpe Diem Restaurant in Atlanta. Nearly 50 clergy and significant others seized this opportunity to share dinner and conversation with colleagues. The room was full, the food was good and fellowship was vibrant.

[Link here to read more](#) about the event.



United Church of Christ | Women's Southern Regional Meeting

October 7-9, 2011 | Blowing Rock, NC | [Link to Register Early!](#)

Join other women from across the south for a faith inspired look towards wholeness. Meet friends from past regional meetings. Relax in the beautiful surroundings of the North Carolina mountains. Renew spirit, vitality and power. [Link here to read additional information](#) on the event.

What About Summer School This Year?

The Place Church Leaders Go to Learn



> July 14 - August 11 | Course

Making Making Churches Safe (for all God's Children) | Jaime Romo

> July 14 | Webinar

The Church Mouse: Leadership Lessons from the Magic Kingdom

> July 19 | Webinar

RENEWAL

Liberating Hope: Daring to Renew the Mainline Church

> July 28 | Webinar

Getting them to “Like” us: Ten Tips for using Social Media

Register today and take advantage of summer specials.

Latest News	Most Read Articles
Feature Focus - June 2011	Southeast Conference UCC (SEC)
News From Our Local Churches - June	UCC History and Polity
Conference News - June	Southeast Conference Campaign
A Word From Tim Downs - June	General Synod 2011
Celebrations June 2011	Steps to Planting a New Church

SECUCC CONTACTS

- ▶ Conference Minister
- ▶ TAP Director
- ▶ SEC Donations
- ▶ Church Development
- ▶ [Communications Director](#)

SECUCC RESOURCES

- ▶ Annual Meeting
- ▶ Global Theological Education
- ▶ Local Church News
- ▶ SEC Churches
- ▶ [Seminars/Webinars](#)

FAVORITE LINKS

- ▶ Bridge 4 Faith
- ▶ The Center for Progressive Renewal
- ▶ United Church of Christ
- ▶ Mission Insite
- ▶ [Resource Center](#)

EVENTS CALENDAR

July 2011						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

Steps to Planting a New Church

News

Contact Us

Donate



News

[Breaking News](#)
[Feature Focus](#)
[Celebrate](#)
[Conference News](#)
[Local Church News](#)
[Lifting Up...](#)
[NEWS Archives](#)
[Upcoming Events](#)
[SEC News Resources](#)

SECUCC eNewsletter

**Sign up for SECUCC
Email Newsletter**

Southeast Conference FAQ's

[Who is the SEC?](#)
[Who is the UCC?](#)
[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)
[What Ministries are Available?](#)
[Is Training Available?](#)

YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ► [CONFERENCE NEWS](#) ► SEC CLERGY SEIZE THE DINNER

SEC Clergy Seize the Dinner

SEC Clergy "Seize the Dinner" | Prior to Annual Meeting

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The inspiration for this event came from the organizers, pastors Susannah Davis of Kirkwood UCC, Atlanta and John Gill of Church of the Savior, Knoxville. Out of their desire to connect with fellow clergy, an idea was born that we hope will gather momentum and become the first of many opportunities for fostering stronger relationships among the ministers of the SEC, as well as offering more opportunities for continuing formation for their ministries.



What an evening - Seizing some time with colleagues.

Colleagues I've known awhile and colleagues I met that Friday night! And more than that, thankfully--friends met and friendships deepened. It was good to be together--really good. The food was marvelous and the company was simply delightful.

*Conversations connecting people at different tables--different states--different areas of ministry, drawing us closer--that we all may be one! **Let's do it again y'all.** -- Susannah Davis*

One of the areas that the Ministry Issues Project emphasizes is the need for continuing education and ongoing formation among authorized ministers in the United Church of Christ. In our efforts to work with Members in Discernment, identifying gifts, discerning call, and preparing them for authorization, we often neglect the important notions of lifelong learning and continuing professional development, as if authorization is an end in itself. In the Southeast Conference, we would like to change expectations both among authorized ministers and the church as a whole so that these priorities become a matter of fact and not just a vision of the way things ought to be. A generous grant from the Brown Foundation helped make the evening possible.

All professions require continuing education so that professionals can keep up with new developments in their fields

and engage in best practices for the good of those whom they serve. This is as important to ministers and the church as it is to doctors and their patients. In these times, when ministers are under stress because of distresses within church and society, it becomes even more important. This is true for both full-time and part-time authorized ministers. In the Southeast Conference, more than 50% of our churches are pastored by bi-vocational ministers. These individuals are subject to the demands of both ministry and other professions, with ministry often being conducted as a part-time "second job" during one's "leisure" time. A large percentage of our authorized ministers serve in settings other than the local church and report a sense of disconnection with their fellow UCC clergy. New Church Start pastors and church developers also describe a sense of isolation in their ministries. Our geography and demographics (53 churches in five states) preclude many of our ministers from meeting with one another on a regular basis for fellowship and mutual support, much less for continuing education and professional development.

The most popular idea was holding local, informal gatherings for dinner, but there was also significant interest in ongoing support or study groups and an annual retreat for fellowship and support. Personally, I like the suggestion for "theological beach getaways," but "clergy bingo" might be more feasible.

*Thanks to all who came and special thanks to the Brown Foundation for supporting this event. We hope it will be the first of many and we hope to see you - or your pastor, or staff or chaplain - there! **Let's do it again, y'all, indeed!** -- John Gill*

And so we gathered to begin to talk with one another about these needs and to imagine opportunities to meet them in creative ways. Both the enthusiasm for this gathering and the results of a survey carried out through a tongue-in-cheek "All God's Children's Menu" show a high level of interest in building relationships among UCC clergy in the Southeast Conference. Everyone who responded to the survey indicated a strong interest in participating in events designed to provide support and build connections between clergy (with nearly 60% saying it ranked a 10 on a scale of 10). We have an enthusiastic beginning and an emerging vision for seizing more opportunities like this in the future.

Latest News	Most Read Articles
Feature Focus - June 2011	Southeast Conference UCC (SEC)
News From Our Local Churches - June	UCC History and Polity
Conference News - June	Southeast Conference Campaign
A Word From Tim Downs - June	General Synod 2011
Celebrations June 2011	Steps to Planting a New Church

SECUCC CONTACTS	SECUCC RESOURCES	FAVORITE LINKS	EVENTS CALENDAR																																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Conference Minister▶ TAP Director▶ SEC Donations▶ Church Development▶ Communications Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Annual Meeting▶ Global Theological Education▶ Local Church News▶ SEC Churches▶ Seminars/Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Bridge 4 Faith▶ The Center for Progressive Renewal▶ United Church of Christ▶ Mission Insite▶ Resource Center	<div>« < July 2011 > »</div> <table><tr><td>S</td><td>M</td><td>T</td><td>W</td><td>T</td><td>F</td><td>S</td></tr><tr><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td>1</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr><tr><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td></tr><tr><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td></tr><tr><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td></tr><tr><td>31</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr></table>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6
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31	1	2	3	4	5	6																																														

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Home About Us Church Growth Directory Leadership Ministry New Church News TAP/PATHWAYS Donate



Tuesday, 19 Jul 2011

News

[Breaking News](#)

[Feature Focus](#)

[Celebrate](#)

[Conference News](#)

[Local Church News](#)

[Lifting Up...](#)

[NEWS Archives](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[SEC News Resources](#)

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[Email Newsletter](#)

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[Who is the SEC?](#)

[Who is the UCC?](#)

[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)

[What Ministries are Available?](#)

[Is Training Available?](#)

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Celebrations June 2011



Congratulations to Southeast Conference for Becoming a Global Mission Partner

The Southeast Conference has received a letter of thanks from Cally Rogers-Witte and Jan Aerie of Global Ministries thanking us for our action of voting to become a Global Mission Partner Conference.



A certificate attached to the letter reads:

"Global Ministries, a common witness of Wider church Ministries, United Church of Christ and Division of Overseas Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) presents this certificate to the Southeast Conference, UCC, in recognition and celebration of your conference's

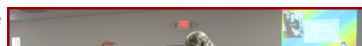
commitment to being a Global Mission Conference, June 11, 2011. "

Link here to read the [speech given by Marcia Bentley](#) at the SEC 2011 Annual Meeting in Atlanta.

Link here to read about [Global Ministries](#).



Jennifer is the first licensed minister to complete the path to authorization as a Member in Discernment. She will serve Garden of Grace UCC alongside the



UCC News

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Headlines from the United Church of Christ

[Clergy health care resolution approved by Synod delegates](#)

Delegates to General Synod 28 restored the vigor of the resolution "Affirming Healthcare Coverage for UCC Authorized Ministers and Their Families." The amended resolution passed with 81 percent of the vote.



Garden of Grace UCC alongside the pastor, Rev. Andy Siddon. Jennifer was recently named to the Board of Directors of the Southeast Conference on which she will serve as secretary. She is also a SEC delegate to General Synod. Jennifer will graduate from the Theology Among the People (TAP) program on August 27, 2011.



Latest News	Most Read Articles
Feature Focus - June 2011	Southeast Conference UCC (SEC)
News From Our Local Churches - June	UCC History and Polity
Conference News - June	Southeast Conference Campaign
A Word From Tim Downs - June	General Synod 2011
Celebrations June 2011	Steps to Planting a New Church

SECUCC CONTACTS

- [Conference Minister](#)
- [TAP Director](#)
- [SEC Donations](#)
- [Church Development](#)
- [Communications Director](#)

SECUCC RESOURCES

- [Annual Meeting](#)
- [Global Theological Education](#)
- [Local Church News](#)
- [SEC Churches](#)
- [Seminars/Webinars](#)

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- [Bridge 4 Faith](#)
- [The Center for Progressive Renewal](#)
- [United Church of Christ](#)
- [Mission Insite](#)
- [Resource Center](#)

EVENTS CALENDAR

July 2011						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

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[Home](#)
[About Us](#)
[Church Growth](#)
[Directory](#)
[Leadership](#)
[Ministry](#)
[New Church](#)
[News](#)
[TAP/PATHWAYS](#)[Donate](#)

Tuesday, 19 Jul 2011

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Southeast Conference FAQ's[Who is the SEC?](#)[Who is the UCC?](#)[How Do I Find a UCC Church?](#)[What Ministries are Available?](#)[Is Training Available?](#)YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) ► [FEATURE FOCUS](#)**Feature Focus - June 2011****A Perfect Day in Atlanta***by Rev. Tim Downs*

In one day we praised the Lord with music and singing, we tackled business, remembered our loved ones who have passed on, and listened to what others had to say. It was a great day, with a little rain, but nothing to dampen the spirits of new and old friends coming together once again.

[Click here to watch video](#) from 5 segments of the conference.

Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta rolled out the red carpet for us all. They provided a team of church members that were ready to direct meeting attendees, prepare food for the hungry, coordinate the day's agenda and see that everyone felt at home. Thank you Central!

Many joined us for the early morning Conversation Corners. There were eight different corners to choose from and the topics covered many interests. We had wonderful discussions and a lot of listening. [Click here to read a reflection](#) of the Transforming Churches Campaign discussion.

[CLICK HERE | SEC 2011
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**UCC News****UCC Newsroom**

Headlines from the United Church of Christ

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The amended resolution passed with 81 percent of the vote.



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Conversation Corners

Click for Slideshow! Click for Slideshow! Click for Slideshow! Click for Slideshow!

Around the Annual Meeting



Our new SEC t-shirt was on sale at the Annual Meeting. If you missed your chance and would like to order one today, **contact Gerricon** **Gerri** in the SEC office. **Link here for order form.** Order one, two or order shirts for your whole team. They are available in all adult sizes.

Latest News	Most Read Articles
<u>Feature Focus - June 2011</u>	<u>Southeast Conference UCC (SEC)</u>
<u>News From Our Local Churches - June</u>	<u>UCC History and Polity</u>
<u>Conference News - June</u>	<u>Southeast Conference Campaign</u>
<u>A Word From Tim Downs - June</u>	<u>General Synod 2011</u>
<u>Celebrations June 2011</u>	<u>Steps to Planting a New Church</u>

EVENTS CALENDAR

- ▶ Bridge 4 Faith
- ▶ The Center for Progressive Renewal